

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Ralph C. Link, Pastor

Christ Church, Duncannon 9:00 A.M.
Trinity Church, New Bloomfield 10:30 A.M.

October 4, 1970

SERVICE OF WORSHIP

Prelude
*Hymn 11
*Solemn Declaration
*Call to Worship
*Confession of Sin - page 4, 1st. prayer
*Kyrie
*Assurance of Pardon
Scripture Lesson:
Matthew 10: 16-23
*Gloria Patri
*Statement of Faith (Front of Hymnal)
Pastoral Prayer
Announcements
Hymn 299

Sermon "THE CHALLENGE OF CHRISTIANITY"
Text Matthew 10: 16-22

Offering
*Doxology (Trinity Church)
*Offering Response (Christ Church)
*Prayer and Lord's Prayer
*Hymn 318
*Benediction
*Threefold Amen
Postlude

*Denotes Congregation Standing

A special offering will be taken today for "Neighbors in Need". If you need an envelope please one of the ushers.

Installation of all Church School officers and teachers at Trinity Church will be held during the worship service Oct. 11.

The "Mission Study" sessions of Church Women United will be held in Trinity United Church of Christ, High St., Oct. 7, and Oct. 14 from 10:30 A.M. to 2:30 P.M. and Oct. 21, from 7:00 P.M. to 9:30 P.M.

The regular monthly Consistory Meeting of Christ Church will be held Monday Oct. 5 at 8:00 P.M.

The Win a Chum Class of Christ Church will meet at the home of Claire Steele Oct. 9 7:30 P.M. Anyone having old linens please bring them to the meeting.

Anyone having announcements or information for the bulletin please call the pastor at 582-4798 before Friday morning of each week.

Trinity United Methodist Church, Barnett St. invites the public to an "Open House" at the Parsonage Sunday, Oct. 4, from 2:00 P.M. until 4:00 P.M.

The Challenge of Christianity

Text: Matthew 10: 16-22

Jesus spoke sometimes in a rather strange way. At least it appears to be strange to us. We read for instance this morning about brother betraying brother, of children rising against their parents and ~~parents~~ parents against children, which is strange talk indeed. Why would He predict such things? To answer this completely cannot be done. We can only try to make a guess at what He was trying to get across. There are those of what we may refer to as radical Churches, who would tell us very definitely that this is a prediction of the world to come. Perhaps it is. But if we look at the writings of Jewish literature, we can come up with some startling facts.

First we must remember that Jesus was speaking mainly to Jewish people. The Jews pictured time as being divided into two ages. The present age which was entirely bad, and the age to come which was the golden age of God. In between was the Day of the Lord. This was the time of destruction and judgment. In much of their writing and literature they made mention of this fact. We spoke several times of the Apocrypha, which is a collection of books that never made it into the Old Testament. There is also another collection of books that never made it into the Old Testament and this collection is called the Pseudepigrapha. This rather imposing name means nothing more than writings under an assumed name. If we separate the first part pseude, we can readily see why, since pseudo means false or pretended. There are two books of the New Testament by the way which were written by someone and then the name of another person was used as the title. The books are Jude and II Peter. But in the Pseudepigrapha there are several references made to the betrayal of family and friends. "All friends shall destroy each other." This is stated in 2 Esdras 5:9. "At that time shall friends make war one against another like enemies." 2 Esdras 6: 24. "And they will strive with one another, the young with the old, and the old with the young, the poor with the rich, and the lowly with the great, and the beggar with the prince." This was taken from the book of Amos 23: 10. And there are several more we could quote but this should be enough to give us an idea of some of the writings of the Jews.

Now perhaps since Jesus was talking to Jews, and He knew these

books as well as they, ~~and~~ therefore He used these illustrations to point out what He was trying to say. Perhaps when He told of the things to come He was in effect saying that the Day of the Lord had arrived and was here during the days they were living instead of off somewhere in the distant future. We can only guess what it is He was actually saying, but perhaps some of this background can make us appreciate a little better where some of His thoughts and illustrations came from.

But Jesus also offered something to His disciples and anyone who wanted to follow Him. He offered them a challenge. He let them know that to follow Him was not a trip on the band wagon or the gravy train. He let them know that this path would be filled with danger, it would be filled with humiliation, with frustration and even with rejection. Look around at what the world has to offer. We are surrounded by the pleasure seekers, by the love of comfort and the love of luxury and ease. We are told by statisticians that because of our luxury and comfort our society is a society of bad posture, it is one of lack of physical exertion, and we are subject to the disease of idleness. ^{IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE} ~~When they built the~~ Houston Astros stadium a survey was made and it was found that in order to accommodate the present day public they had to make the seats so many inches wider. This should give us some idea of how our present generation spends most of its time. We are a society of sitters. But this is not what Jesus promised to His followers. He knew that the sitting down and the ease and the luxury would not be there. ^{PUT} What Jesus offered has not been unique down through history. ^{THERE ARE MANY CASES WE CAN CITE.}

In 1849 after the siege of Rome Garibaldi offered this proclamation to his men, "Soldiers, all our efforts against superior forces have been unavailing. I have nothing to offer you but hunger and thirst, hardship and death; but I call on all who love their country to join with me." They came by the hundreds. Sir Winston Churchill offered his country, "Blood, sweat and tears", after Dunkirk. Pizarro the Spanish explorer gave his little band of men a choice between the safety of Panama and the unknown hazards of Peru. He took his sword and drew a line with it in the sand from east to west. "Friends and comrades," he said, "On that side are toil and hunger, nakedness the drenching storm, desertion and death: on this side ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its treasures and riches; here lies Panama

and it's poverty. Choose each man what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part I go South." And he stepped across the line. And thirteen men stepped across with him. Another example is the one of the man named Shackleton who proposed to go to the South Pole. He asked for volunteers and expected to receive no response, or a very scant response at that. He thought not too many would risk ease and safety to cross the blizzards of the Polar ice. However the response was overwhelming. Young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated responded. Now these are all human summons to seek the hard road to follow. The challenge which Jesus gave to His followers brought a response from three areas. It brought a response from the state, it brought a response from the Church, and it brought a response from the families of the followers.

Now why would any state government want to persecute the early Christians and the Christians down through the years for that matter? There were several reasons for this. One reason being the fact that in the early church the rumor was prevalent that the Christians were indeed cannibals. This was brought about by the very words of the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, which spoke of eating His body and drinking His blood. Then they were accused of immorality because they called their feast the Agape feast. Agape is the Greek word for love. Maybe I should say that it was one of three words for love. Two of the words were used to express physical and human love, while the third, Agape was used to express the kind of love Jesus taught and spoke of. Therefore calling the Lord's supper the Agape or love feast implied that they were performing a large scale orgy. Then they were accused of being treasonous and disloyal citizens for not taking the oath to the emperor.

Then the reason why the Church itself persecuted Christians is because the church is made up of men and women. Human beings in other words. Therefore there are and have been times when someone inside the church has disturbed the usual peace and serenity of the church. Men like Martin Luther who have come forward to protest the evil and corruption that can creep into the church when it becomes too self-satisfied, and too large and wealthy. In the latest issue of Christianity today is an article about churches who have had their fire and building









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Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.